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Broadcasters Letter

United States Department of Agriculture • Office of Communications • Washington, DC 20250-1300

Letter No. 2700

February 10, 1995

1996 BUDGET REFLECTS SAVINGS -- The proposed FY 1996 budget for USDA proposes saving hundreds of millions of dollars through reorganization while making investments in our country's future. The proposed \$62.3 billion in outlays for FY 1996 is at the same level as the current estimate for FY 1995. Acting Secretary Richard Rominger said, "USDA is at the forefront of the Administration's commitment to a more responsible government, a government that works better and costs less." USDA's reorganization and streamlining efforts add up to \$535 million in savings for FY 1996. The Department's total savings are expected to reach \$4.1 billion and reduce staffing by more than 13,000 by 1999. The budget reflects reduced commodity program spending, new export sales opportunities, increased funding for conservation programs and commits to improving the nation's meat and poultry inspection system. **Contact: Tom Amontree (202) 720-4623.**

PRODUCERS, TAXPAYERS BENEFIT FROM PRICES -- Higher prices for upland cotton, up 14 cents per pound from a year ago, means increased income for producers and savings for the taxpayer. Strong world-wide cotton demand and poor crops in competing foreign countries, have caused upland cotton prices to rise in a relatively short period of time. Advance payments of 6.45 cents per pound were made to eligible producers requesting advance payments. Refunds of 1994-crop deficiency overpayments are due at the end of the marketing year, which ends on July 31, 1995. Producers who received overpayments have the option of offsetting the refund against other program payments due prior to the end of the marketing year. **Contact: Bruce Merkle (202) 720-8206.**

A CASE OF AVIAN INFLUENZA -- USDA is alerting poultry producers to increase biosecurity measures following official reports of an outbreak of highly pathogenic avian influenza in central Mexico. USDA received notification from Mexican federal authorities that highly pathogenic H5N2 strains of avian influenza have been isolated from flocks on three related egg-laying operations in Tehuacan, Mexico. Mexican animal health officials believe that the highly pathogenic AI virus may have been introduced into commercial poultry by migratory waterfowl. A plan has been developed to control spread of this virus through surveillance, quarantine and vaccination of flocks in the areas surrounding the outbreak. **Contact: Kendra Pratt (301) 436-4898.**

FIRST GARLIC FROM TRUE SEED -- The first garlic produced from true seed in the U.S. has been grown by a USDA researcher in Madison, Wisconsin. Typically reproduced by planting individual cloves, garlic was thought to be sexually sterile. But plant geneticist Philipp W. Simon of USDA's Agricultural Research Service said, "I found numerous European and Asian domestic garlicks and a wild ancestor that produce flowers, the first step of sexual reproduction. Of those plants producing flowers, only a small number produce seed." Garlic plants that produce flowers are rare in most U.S. varieties. Producing garlic from true seed could shorten the growing season and cut production costs because the seed are smaller than cloves and are easier to handle, store and transport. **Contact: Linda Cooke (309) 681-6530.**

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QUARANTINE REMOVED -- USDA has removed a quarantine requirement for horses imported from Mexico. The quarantine was instituted as a precautionary measure after an outbreak of Venezuela equine encephalomyelitis (VEE) was reported in 1993 in Mexico. This removes the USDA requirement that horses from Mexico be quarantined for seven days to prevent the entry of insects and other potential disease vectors prior to importation into the U.S. **Contact: Kendra Pratt (301) 436-4898.**

PRICING FORMULA CHANGES FOR MILK -- USDA has replaced the current pricing series for milk sold under federal milk orders. USDA will implement the new pay price series after approval by producers, who will vote on the amended orders. The decision is based on a June 1992 hearing, and supports the replacement of the current Minnesota-Wisconsin (M-W) price series with a "base-month" price series. The new price series is statistically more reliable than the current M-W price, but is not expected to be a long-term solution. The base-month M-W price, available on or before the fifth of each month, would be used to represent pay prices for the second preceding month. Also, Class II milk prices will be computed by adding a fixed differential of 30 cents to the M-W price for the second preceding month. The Class II pricing changes are scheduled to take effect March 1. **Contact: Becky Unkenholz (202) 720-8998.**

POULTRY GRADE STANDARDS -- To reflect advancements within the poultry industry and changes in consumer preferences, USDA is updating voluntary poultry grade standards. The last time poultry grade standards were amended was in June of 1986. Those changes established a standard for quality of raw, boneless, skinless poultry products and clarified the tolerance for exposed flesh and discoloration in ready-to-cook carcasses. The current revisions amend existing regulations with regard to discolorations, the definition of exposed flesh and procurement grades, and establish new grading criteria for large poultry parts. These changes will affect all processors who request voluntary poultry grading services. **Contact: Gil High (202) 720-8998.**

NO EXTENSION FOR COTTON LOANS -- Loan extensions will not be available on outstanding CCC recourse upland cotton price support loans maturing February 28, 1995. Extensions are not available when the average price for upland cotton in designated spot markets for the preceding month exceeds 130 percent of the average spot price for base quality for the preceding 36 months. The January, 1995 average spot market price was 88.11 cents per pound, which is 145 percent of the January, 1992 through December, 1994 average price. **Contact: Bruce Merkle (202) 720-8206.**

FINAL RICE ARP -- The acreage reduction requirement for the 1995 crop of rice will be 5 percent, with an established target price of \$10.71 per hundredweight. The national average support rate will be \$6.50 per hundredweight. The deficiency payment rate will be based on the lower of the 1995 calendar-year price or the average price for the August through December period, adjusted by an amount that is fair and reasonable in relation to wheat and feed grains. The adjustment to the 5-month price is \$.27 per hundredweight, the same amount as for the 1994 crop. **Contact: Bruce Merkle (202) 720-8206.**

ELISA TEST APPROVED -- USDA has proposed adding the GPI ELISA test to the list of official tests approved for use in the cooperative pseudorabies eradication program. Allowing the GPI ELISA test to be used for an official pseudorabies test would relieve some restrictions on the interstate movement of certain swine herds that have been given gene-altered pseudorabies vaccines. **Contact: Kendra Pratt (301) 436-4898.**

FROM OUR RADIO SERVICE

AGRICULTURE USA # 1967 -- The proposed budget for USDA in 1996 is the topic of this week's Agriculture USA. Brenda Curtis talks with several USDA officials about what's in the plans for next year's spending allowance. (Weekly cassette -- 13-1/2 minute documentary).

CONSUMER TIME # 1448 -- 1996 budget increases spending for USDA feeding programs; U.S. exporting sweetness; weight loss and bone loss; an early spring?; resetting your biological clock. (Weekly cassette -- consumer features).

AGRITAPE FEATURES # 1959 -- Proposed USDA budget keeps farm program spending stable; dairy barn of the future; farmers benefitting from candy export boom; poultry outlook; new honey bee ailment. (Weekly cassette -- news features).

UPCOMING ON USDA RADIO NEWSLINE -- Monday, February 27, dairy outlook. Tuesday, February 28, ag prices; poultry outlook; weekly weather and crops; dairy markets and trade; tobacco markets and trade. Wednesday, March 1, world horticultural trade and export opportunities. Thursday, March 9, world ag supply and demand for cotton. Friday, March 10, world agricultural supply and demand; cotton and wool outlook. **These are USDA reports we know about in advance. Our newslines carry many stories every day which are not listed in this lineup.**

USDA RADIO NEWSLINES (202) 488-8358 or 8359.

COMREX ENCODED (202) 720-2545

Material changed at 5 p.m., ET, each working day.

FROM OUR TELEVISION SERVICE

NOTE: This week's feed runs a total of 30 minutes.

FEATURES -- Patrick O'Leary reports on USDA's proposed budget for 1996, and on California's continuing recovery from floods (3 stories: crops, urban flood control structures, AmeriCorps offers help).

ACTUALITIES -- Acting USDA Secretary Richard Rominger and USDA Budget Director Stephen Dewhurst on the proposed 1996 budget.

UPCOMING FEATURE -- USDA scientists try to control whiteflies with a natural fungus.

SATELLITE COORDINATES FOR TV NEWSFEEDS:

Thursday, 3:45 p.m. to 4:00 p.m. ET, Telstar 302, Channel 6 (Transponder 3H), (C-band), audio 6.2 and 6.8, downlink frequency 3820 MHz. Monday, 11:00-11:15 a.m. ET, Galaxy 4, Channel 12 (C-band), audio 6.2 and 6.8, downlink frequency 3940 MHz.

Comments and suggestions are welcome regarding USDA broadcast services.

Call Larry A. Quinn, (202) 720-6072; write 1618-S, USDA, Washington, D.C. 20250-1300.

OFF MIKE

RADIO NEWSLINE SURVEY...is underway. We'd like to hear from all broadcasters who call and use our dial-up, daily radio newslane service. Describe how you use the service. Tell us if you use the newslane daily, weekly, monthly, occasionally, or not at all and why. Do you prefer stories or actualities, or do you use both? Include information about size of station's listening audience and number of stations on networks. Please FAX your responses immediately to **202-720-5773**. This is part of our review and evaluation of all broadcast services we provide.

NEW AGRIBUSINESS DIRECTOR...at WIBC Radio in Indianapolis, IN, is **Lew Middleton** who was previously with Agri-America Network there. Lew says he broadcasts farm news and markets throughout weekdays and anchors a Saturday program from 5-6:00 a.m. Corn producers in his area are watching the price and supply situation of nitrogen fertilizers as they plan this year's crop.

SPRING PLANTING TV SPECIAL...is in the planning stages by **Dale Hansen** (KWWL-TV, Waterloo, IA). He says the program will air in prime time from 6:30-7 p.m. on April 1. Dale is finishing 21 years as an agricultural reporter for Channel 7. He has regular farm news and market reports on between 6-7 a.m. and at noon. Also, he frequently covers agricultural stories for their evening news programs.

OUTSTANDING FARM WOMAN...search is on in three counties of Wisconsin, reports **Grace Kirchner** (WFCL/WJMQ, Clintonville, WI). Nominations from Waupaca, Outagamie, and Shawano counties are due by the end of the month. Winners will be announced in mid-March, and an overall winner will be chosen. More than \$500 in gifts will be awarded. Candidates must have their main source of income from the farm and be active in family and community projects. Also, Grace notes that she has done several news features about reorganization and relocation of USDA offices in her area.



LARRY A. QUINN, Director
Video, Teleconference and Radio Center

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